THE DROSKY AND ITS DRIVER

The Hansom Cab of the City Founded by Peter the Great.

Cheap and Rapid Transportation—The Ishvoshtnik and His Habits.

Drosky-Riding, and Why It Is Popular with Young Men and Women.

The Russian Horse—The Imperial Postal Service—The Genuine Russian Bath.

[WILLIAM ELEROY CURTIS, IN CHICAGO NEWS.]

Instead of Washington, Petersburg should be called the city of magnificent distances. It is a ride of three-quarters of an hour from the railway station to the hotels in the center of the town, and it is so far to almost every place the stranger wants to visit that he has neither the time nor the strength for walking. But he has the drosky, that curious vehicle that is found nowhere else, and street cars that take him anywhere and everywhere. Only the peasants use the street cars, however, and we were warned against using them because of the vermin.

The fares are very cheap—as cheap as the ferries in New York. One can ride from one end of the city to the other for 10 copecks, and the usual fare is 5—about 2 cents. But the droskies

SHOP-KEEPER.

are quite as cheap when comfort is taken into consideration. I was about to take a street car one day to go to a shop a mile or so distant from the hotel, when the guide remonstrated and insisted upon a drosky.

"But what's the use of taking a drosky," I said, "when the cars go right to the place?"

"It is about as cheap for the two of us," he replied, and so it was, for the cost of the journey, for two passengers, about a mile, was 9 cents, and we were hauled by a horse that would sell in New York for $500.

In no country in the world are there such cheap, comfortable, and rapid facilities for city transportation as in Petersburg, and nowhere can one find such splendid horses.

The drosky is an institution that ought to be introduced into the States. There is one in Washington, owned and used by Mr. Alex. Greger, the Secretary of the Russian Legation, and it is a great curiosity, but they would be very useful and popular in all our cities, particularly if they could be drawn by Russian horses. There is as much fascination in riding in a drosky as in a gondola in Venice, and it is the first thing a traveler wants to do when he arrives in Petersburg. He will send his bags by the omnibus and go to the hotel in a drosky. It is a low vehicle, the floor being scarcely more than a foot from the ground, on four wheels not much larger than those of a wheelbarrow—a sort of a miniature victoria. The ishvoshtnik, or driver, sits upon a high perch far above the heads of the passengers, who have a low, narrow, backless seat over the hind wheels. It is not uncomfortable, but the sensation at first is alarming, particularly when you are whizzing around a corner, for the drivers always go like mad, and you wish there was something to hold on to. You fasten your hand on the seat with a good grip, and cling to your your fellow-passenger, if you have one.

I should remark, by way of parenthesis, that when a gentleman is riding with a lady in Russia, in the daytime as well as after dark, in the principal thoroughfares as well as in the secluded portions of the parks, he always puts his arm around her waist. It is the custom of the country, and makes drosky-riding popular with young people—as popular as dancing—and causes no more remark than the attitude of a waltz in a ball-room—every one expects it. A little experience causes the alarm to wear off, and you become accustomed to let your body sway with the motions of the vehicle. I inquired if any one was ever thrown out of a drosky, and was told that such a thing never happened, and I think it is true, for I have seen men riding in them so drunk that I thought they would top-

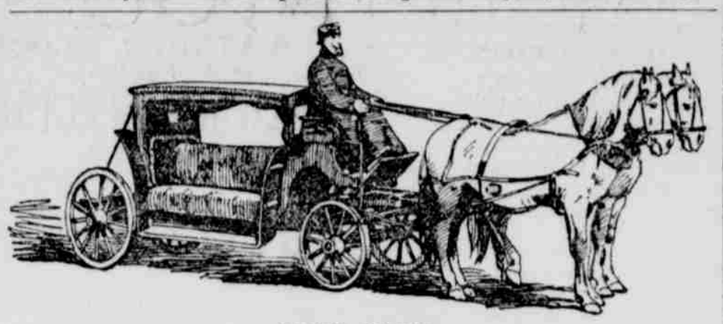
ple over the next instant, but they never did.

The Russian Horse.

The horse that draws you and the driver who holds the reins are both Russian institutions, and you won't find their like elsewhere.

One can find poor horses in Russia, I suppose, but very few in Petersburg or the other large cities. They are tall, long-legged animals, with slender bodies and limbs, long silken manes and tails, the latter nearly always reaching to the ground, small heads, small feet, large, intelligent eyes, and necks arched like the chargers one sees in pictures of the Bedouins of the desert. I always thought such horses were the creation of the artists, but Russia is full of them. There is a familiar picture of wild horses fleeing from a fire on the prairies, with long manes and tails floating in the breeze, with eyes flashing fire and fury, and flecks of foam floating in the air from their lips and nostrils, and another of similar animals ridden by Bedouins with sheets wrapped around their heads and scimetars in their hands.

I have always admired these pictures



A HOTEL OMNIBUS.

as expressive of all that horses should be, but I never saw such animals alive till I went to Russia. There you can see a thousand that look just as if they had stepped out of that picture, on any street of the city, every day, many of them harnessed to droskies that you can hire for 45 cents an hour. The ishvoshtnik is always proud of his horse, if he has a good one, and treats him much better than he does his wife. Nearly all the time he is disengaged the ishvoshtnik is either petting or rubbing his horse, and at intervals he brings out a little nose-bag from under the seat, to feed him oats or meal.

Habits of the Ishvoshtnik.

Not one in ten of these charioteers has a home, and not one in ten of these splendid horses knows the inside of a stable. They live in the harness, in the open air summer and winter, being always on duty, eating when opportunity offers, and sleeping in their droskies between drives. Every hour or two the driver takes a nose-bag full of oats from under his seat to feed his

THE ISHVOSHTNIK COSTUME.

animal, and in the streets of the cities convenient arrangements have been made for the accommodation of this important class of the population. Water-troughs are erected at intervals, small packages of hay, oats and meal are sold at the shops along the wayside, and the ishvoshtnik gets his coffee and his meat at the same places, feeding, as he lives, with his horse. Both horses and masters seem never to tire, both are always on the alert, the drivers are always cheerful and good-natured, and the horses always ready to start off like a whirlwind as soon as they get the word. Neither seems to care for the cold or rain, and the one is about as much an animal as the other.

The harness of the horse is as light as leather can be made, none of the straps being more than half an inch in width, and most of them are round, not larger than a lead pencil. There is no breechen, because there are no grades in Petersburg, the country is perfectly level. There are no blinders on the bridle, for the horse fears nothing; he will walk up to a locomotive with as much indifference as his master. He never shies, never gets rattled, never runs away, but is perfectly obedient to the voice of his master. There are no traces, as the vehicle is drawn by the thills, which are made fast to the heavy collar with a high hoop over the horse's neck. The collar is a part of the drosky, not of the harness, for when the horse is taken away from the vehicle, the collar goes with the latter.

The hoop over the horse's neck, which connects the ends of the thills and looks like an exaggerated, badly formed horseshoe, is called the "duga," and underneath the apex, on equipages in the country, is fastened a big bell—sometimes two or three bells—which jangle so loudly that they may be heard a half-mile away. The purpose of the bell is to announce the coming of the horseman; to frighten away the wolves that invest the country roads, and to warn other travelers upon narrow and dangerous highways against collisions. The droskies in the cities were formerly decorated with bells, but they made such a din that the government issued an edict to abolish them. Now, when the vehicle is approaching a corner at a high rate of speed, and it never goes slowly, the driver announces his coming by a shout—a peculiar, prolonged tone like the gondoliers use at Venice. In the winter bells are necessary, for

THE ISHVOSHTNIK.

their sledges are noiseless and the ordinary speed is great.

A Whip Is Never Used.

I did not see one during my entire stay in Petersburg, but the ishvoshtnik keeps up a continual one-sided conversation with his fleet-footed partner, now encouraging him with tender, caressing epithets; now stinging him with sarcasm and taunts of scorn, and again hurling at the horse profane expletives. The effect of the driver's voice is peculiar and powerful, and an observant rider will be interested in studying this odd relationship. Now the stallion, and only stallions are used, "is precious to the soul" of the ishvoshtnik, or is his "tender dove;" a few moments later he is accused of being something entirely different in terms that cannot be printed here, and the horse seems to understand every word.

"Come, pretty pigeon, let go thy legs."

"Go! Go! pass the brute beside thee, my sweetheart; let not that worthless wretch kick dirt in thy eyes."

"Go swiftly, my beauty, and thou shalt have more oats than thy eyes have seen for a month."

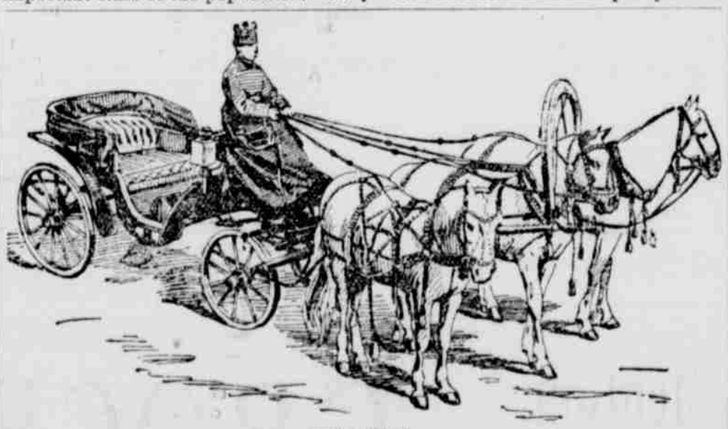
"Thou art lazy to-day, thou son of my heart; wilt thou freeze in thy tracks here, starveling?"

"Look out for that stone there, little father; carefully, carefully; this road was not made for the Czar."

"What dost thou with thine eyes, accursed thing? Thy mother's colt ought not to run in holes like that one."

"Now speed thee, oh, kitten! for the passenger has promised me a ruble if thou makest haste!"

This sort of taunts and pet phrases



A TARANTAS.

are continually flung at the horse, and there is a good deal of poetry and pathos in the relationship between him and his driver.

When the reins are tightened the horse goes; when they are relaxed he stops. The drivers also use a queer sound made by rolling the tongue, a sort of troll-ll-ll-ll-ll-ll which means business. When the horse hears that

HOW THE HORSES ARE HARNESSED.

he straightens himself out and goes for all he is worth. They never go slowly, but in the most reckless fashion, the drivers jeering and shouting at each other as they pass, with good-humored banter, while the pedestrian takes the best care of himself he can. People seldom cross the street at a walk, unless it is deserted. They give a look in one direction, then in the other, and, gathering their skirts around them, run for their lives. Vehicles always have the right of way, and it is a popular tradition that the hospitals are established solely for the treatment of unfortunates who have been run over.

The costume of the ishvoshtnik is novel and peculiar. He wears either a cap of blue cloth, made in the Tam-o'-Shanter style with a wide front-piece of stiff leather, or a stiff silk hat about half the height of the ordinary "plug," a long blue surtout that reaches to his heels, and covers his high-top boots. Under that surtout or dressing gown, which is bound around his waist by a belt, are supposed to be concealed all his worldly treasures, among which one can imagine are several feather beds, from the dropsical appearance of the subject. His circumference is enormous; he fills up an ordinary doorway, and when perched upon his drosky he laps over the seat many inches on all sides. When you attempt to attract the driver's attention by poking him in the back with your cane or umbrella, you must use considerable violence, for the point will sink into his wrappings several inches before it reaches the sensible part of his frame.

The Imperial Post Service.

Travelers in the country where there are no railways usually prefer to make use of the imperial post service, which exists upon the principal lines of communication, and will furnish relays of horses at intervals of twenty or thirty miles. In order to obtain them, one must secure from the postal authorities a "podorozhnaya"—a formidable-looking document, which directs whom it may concern to assist the bearer on his way, to furnish him promptly with a certain number of horses, from certain points to certain points, for a certain price named, and must be paid in advance at the respective road station. The "podorozhnaya" costs a considerable sum itself, which is devoted to the repair of the roads. Armed with these credentials the traveler applies to the nearest post station for a postilion, horses, and a vehicle known as a "tarantas," a sort of overgrown drosky, heavily and strongly made, with exceedingly stiff springs, and a general condition of discomfort. Sometimes the horses are very fine and fast; sometimes they are only ordinary, but their appearance is no test of their speed, for I have seen the most "ornary"-looking brutes gallop over a distance of twenty miles in two hours and a half without turning a hair. Usually they are driven three abreast, but often when the passenger is in a hurry, or the roads are bad, or the distance is great, four or even five are harnessed abreast. There is no tongue, or pole, but only a pair of thills, no matter how many horses. One is hitched in the thills and does the

A FELDSHER.

steering; two others are fastened to the axle or the whiffletrees, and their heads are kept together by straps. Very seldom do they trot, but commonly go at a gallop mile after mile.

In the winter months traveling is much more agreeable, notwithstanding the cold. The sledges are much more comfortable than the wheeled vehicles, and one can sleep in a nest of furs that is provided for him. Passengers are often frost bitten, but a Russian thinks no more of such an accident than of a mosquito bite. The latter would probably annoy him the more. He does not go to a fire to warm when frost-bitten but rubs the part with snow until the friction thaws it out, and no discomfort follows.

But the natives of all classes are capable of enduring an almost incredible amount of heat and cold. They dress warmly in furs and flannels, but even such garments would not reconcile an ordinary man or woman to a temperature which sends the mercury down to thirty or forty degrees below zero, day after day and week after week, almost continuously from November till April. The Russian peasant is frequently alluded to as first cousin to the polar bear, and his habits and endurance seem to establish the relationship. He will drive a sledge across the bleak plains, with the wind howling at the rate of thirty miles an hour and the therometer frozen, without the slightest apparent discomfort, and he will sit on the box of a coach or a sledge before the theater, or a house in which there is a reception, hour after hour, and chat socially with his fellows, when the mercury is down to forty below zero.

The Genuine Russian Bath.

The Russian bath, as we know it, cannot be had in the country from which it gets its name. In New York or Chicago it is common. The subject is placed in a chest, with his head sticking out through the top, and steam is turned on his body for awhile, then he plunges into a pool of cold water, and is thoroughly rubbed by an attendant. Such baths may be had in Russia, but I could not learn where. The real Russian bath, that which the mujik takes, and from which ours gets its name, is considerably different. The mujik crawls into his oven, which is built large enough to accommodate him, lies there till he is afloat in his own perspiration, and then runs out naked into the open air and rolls in the snow.

This extraordinary procedure is adopted as a cure for disease, as well as for the purification of the person, and is said to be effective. The upper classes have baths in their homes as we do, and have physicians of great skill to treat them when they are sick, but in the rural districts there are few doctors of medicine, and diseases are treated—sometimes cured—and wounds are dressed, either by what is known as a "Feldsher," or a "Znakharka."

The former is usually some old soldier, retired from the army, crippled or disabled by disease, and has some knowledge of surgery which he has learned in the barracks or the hospitals. He can set a limb with some skill, is familiar with the standard remedies for fevers and other common ailments, and understands the uses of ordinary physic.

The "Znakharka" is a midwife, a fortune-teller, a village gossip, a dealer in herbs, an interpreter of dreams and signs and omens, a manipulator of charms and amulets, a sorceress, who exorcises the evil spirits, and a witch,

A ZNAKHARKA.

who practices all forms of demonomy. She usually treats the women and children, while the "Feldsher" treats the men. In addition to the exercise of sorcery, and the practice of the healing arts, she is also useful in negotiating marriages among the peasants. In her capacity of confidential friend and gossip she knows what hearts are loose and may be tied together. If a maiden loves a young mujik, she confides in the "Znakharka," who endeavors to bring them together, and the young mujiks often seek her mediation when the maidens of the village are indifferent to their attentions.

Poor Old Arkansas.

Half a century ago, while the first Legislature elected in Arkansas after she was admitted into the Union was in session, an affray occurred on the floor of the House of Representatives between Col. John Wilson, the Speaker of the House, and a member named Anthony, in which the latter was killed. The weapon used by Speaker Wilson on that occasion was a bowie-knife, and from that day to this Arkansas has borne a hard name in the North, and by many has been called the "Bowie Knife State." But notwithstanding the handicapping under which she has been compelled to move in the race of progress, she bids fair to outstrip nearly all the Southern States before another decade. George Russ Brown, of the Little Rock *Gazette*, at a press banquet in Memphis the other day, responded to the toast "Arkansas," and in the course of his remarks told some things and gave some statistics touching his State which may prove of interest, if not of value, to people who may be contemplating the seeking of homes farther South:

"We have a State 200 miles across from north to south, and we raise every product known to the temperate zone and supply semi-tropical fruits in abundance. Of strawberries and melons we run special train loads to the markets of the North. Prior to 1872 we were practically without railroads, and now the State is gridironed with them, and we have more miles of navigable river than any other State—4,000 miles. The resources are greater than any other section of territory of equal area on the face of the globe. Can you find another State where fifty-eight out of seventy-five counties bear manufacturing minerals? Can you find another State whose long staple cotton wins the big premium wherever shown and whose fruits are awarded first prizes in such rapid succession?

"Where is there another State showing eighty different varieties of timber and 3,000 square miles of heavily timbered land? And we are erecting one new wood-working establishment every ten days. And, by the way, Arkansas produces more cotton per acre than any other Southern State. Poor old Arkansas!

"We have pine trees enough to make 40,000,000,000 feet of lumber, and last year the output of our mills brought us $20,000,000 and furnished our already over-taxed railroad lines with 100,000 car-loads of product, and besides we also made heavy shipments of logs to European countries via river to New Orleans. Unknown, idle, traduced Arkansas!

"A word about our free schools, for often we are referred to as illiterate. We had last year 2,102 free schoolhouses and 374,767 pupils. We expended on our free schools $897,623. The increase in schools is 233, in pupils 16,761, and in funds expended $50,700. Arkansas is becoming enlightened!"

Why He Wore a Ring.

"Isn't that rather a peculiar ring for a man to wear?" asked Mr. Madison Squeer of Mr. Upson Downes, as they met in one of those up-town cafes where they don't sell cafe.

"Dunno," replied Mr. Downes, gloomily: "I tried it on a girl and she didn't seem to think it was what she wanted."—*Puck*.

Darwin Outdone.

"Him what?" asked an Indian of a visitor at the Central Park menagerie, pointing at a baboon that was swinging by his tail from a perch in his cage.

"Baboon," returned the gentleman politely.

"Ugh!" grunted the Indian, after watching the animal intently for a few moments, "half Chinaman, half cat!"

ACCORDING to Camden, gaming was introduced into England by the Saxons, and the loser was often made a slave to the winner, and sold in traffic, like other merchandise.

Charles Goodyear.

Among the inventors who had sacrifice enough for their brain-children to be called indeed "martyrs," is Charles Goodyear, the man to whom we are indebted for India-rubber. It was in 1820 that a pair of rubber shoes was seen for the first time in the United States, and then they were merely handed about as a curiosity. Goodyear found, in 1834, that for all practical purposes, rubber was a failure. Articles made from it melted in summer, and emitted such an offensive odor that it became necessary to bury them. At the time when his attention was turned to the subject, he was a bankrupt, and his first experiments with rubber were made in jail.

Like all persevering inventors, he thereafter sacrificed not only his time and money, for the sake of his project, but all the funds which he could borrow or beg from his friends.

His wife's jewels and family relics speedily found their way to the pawnbroker's and Goodyear moved into the country in order that he might live as economically as possible. At length his invention was patented, and a wealthy partner joined him; but a commercial crisis soon swept away every cent of their joint capital.

Then Goodyear found that he had not even enough money to buy food for his family, and the pawnbroker became his only resource.

He had become an object of general ridicule, and one of his New York friends, having been asked how he was to be recognized in the street, said of him, "If you see a man wearing an India-rubber coat, India-rubber shoes, an India-rubber cap, and in his pocket an India-rubber purse, with not a cent in it, that is he."

For he constantly wore the material about, with the twofold object of testing and advertising it.

Sometimes he seemed to be on the road to prosperity. The Government once gave him an order for one hundred and fifty rubber mail-bags, but when they were made, the handles dropped off and the rubber fermented.

But Goodyear was not disheartened. He baked India-rubber in his wife's oven, boiled it in her saucepans, steamed it at the nose of the teakettle, roasted it in ashes, and toasted it before fires quick and slow. And all this time he was regarded by most people as a harmless but a very wearisome lunatic.

His children were often sick, hungry and cold, and it is said that he once sold their schoolbooks for five dollars, with which he laid in a new stock of gum and sulphur for his experiments.

His darkest hour came when he had in the house a dead child, with no means of burying it, and five living members of the family, with no food for their next meal. His immediate want was relieved, and his brothers advanced money for carrying on his experiments. In 1844, he was able to produce vulcanized India-rubber, with absolute economy and success.

But, having attained one object, he adopted another, no less dear, that of perfecting a life-saving apparatus, and, after twenty-seven years of labor, having actually founded a new industry, he died insolvent, leaving his family an inheritance of debt.

Georgia Girls Stampeded.

A farmer walked up to the station leading a young steer by a rope attached to his horns, which steer was drawing a two-wheel cart, and in the cart sat an old lady and two buxom young girls. They, the girls, had never before seen a railroad, and had come down on this quiet Sabbath morn to see the monster for the first time.

After driving the steer and cart over the road the old man drove up by the side of the track a few feet and halted. Just then the whistle of the engine was heard as it approached the station, and the rumbling sound was heard for the first time by the two girls. The both jumped up as the steaming, shrieking engine came rushing into view, while Buck threw up his head and began to back.

The old man yelled "Whoa, Buck!" while the old woman said, "Sot still, Victoria Elizabeth, you an' Josephine Boarnergus, it ain't er gwain ter hurt yer. Me an' yer pap has rid on keers," and she caught hold of the dress of each one, but the engine gave another shriek and seemed to be dashing straight on them. Both girls jumped out, one on either side of the wagon, while Buck gave a snort and started off at full tilt. Pap held on to the rope, and was jerked along at the rate of twenty miles an hour, hollering, "Whoa, Buck! yer dern fool, it won't hurt yer," while the old woman was spilled in a terribly mixed up state with her clothing, calling first to one girl and then to the other: "Victoria Elizabeth, yo' and Josephine Boarnergus stop there, ther thing can't run off the track."

But her entreaty was in vain; the girls heard her, but believed their salvation was in flight, and they ran about as fast as Buck, while the old woman picked herself up and started after "Victory." Josephine was going at lightning speed, and approaching a fence, leaped over it like a deer, but her dress caught on a stake, and there was a tearing sound, but no stop—she went flying over the field like a racer, while her skirts flew to the breeze like a banner of defiance. The old woman, with some help, caught Victoria Elizabeth, while the old man ran Buck into the corner of a fence and soon had him securely tied; but Josephine had a good half-mile start when the old man went in pursuit, saying: "Gosh! how that leetle creetur can hop. I'll hatter be mighty spry to cotch her in ten miles o' here!" And he put out like a quarter horse. The old woman and two other parties were holding Victoria Elizabeth when the train moved off, but we have not heard whether the old man ever caught up with "Josephine Boarnergus" or not.—*American Republican*.

A Blow at Polygamy.

A.—It is time Government should aim a blow at Mormonism."

B.—"Blowing ain't going to crush it. It requires something with the energy of a pile-driver to knock out polygamy. There has been too much blow-about it already."—*Texas Siftings*.

THERE is never a wakeful hour that one can afford to be off his guard in his thinking.